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Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9037

S E C R E T CAIRO 16018

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP, PFOR, EG, US, IS
SUBJ: CHAIRMAN WOLFF'S COMMENTS RE SADAT'S DESIRE TO HAVE "SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY" RESUMED

1. BY SEPTEL, EMBASSY IS REPORTING CODEL WOLFF'S PRESS CONFERENCE LAST NIGHT AT CONCLUSION OF ITS VISIT. ONE STATEMENT MADE BY CHAIRMAN WOLFF IN HIS INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT HAS GIVEN RISE TO SOME CONFUSION. THE CHAIRMAN SAID, INTER ALIA, "PRESIDENT SADAT HAS REQUESTED A NEW US INITIATIVE TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK THAT EXISTS IN MOVING TOWARD PEACE. HE URGED A RENEWAL OF AMERICAN SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY BECAUSE, AS HE STATED, THE UNITED STATES IS THE ONLY GREAT POWER THAT IS TRUSTED BY BOTH SIDES OF THE ARAB/ISRAELI CONTROVERSY."

2. PRESIDENT SADAT DID INDEED ASK FOR A NEW US INITIATIVE TO GET THE PEACE PROCESS BEGUN AGAIN. HE DID NOT ASK FOR A RENEWAL OF "SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY" AND, AS I UNDERSTOOD HIM, ADDED THAT THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH WAS OVER. SO FAR AS I COULD TELL, NO OTHER MMEMBER OF THE CODEL UNDERSTOOD THE PRESIDENT TO ASK FOR A RENEWAL OF "SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY." I SOUGHT TO POINT OUT TO THE DRAFTERS OF THE CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT THAT THE "SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY" REFERENCE WAS NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE GOE POSITION, AND I KNOW VARIOUS CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS
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INDICATED THAT IT WAS ALSO NOT THEIR IMPRESSION THAT

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THE PRESIDENT WAS ASKING FOR A RESUMPTION OF "SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY." NEVERTHELESS, THE REFERENCE REMAINED IN THE STATEMENT. CBS CORRESPONDENT JOHN SHEEHAN PICKED IT UP AND ASKED ABOUT IT.

3. THE CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT HAS CAUSED SOME FUROR AMONG SENIOR EGYPTIANS. I MENTIONED IT TO MINSTATE MOHAMED RIAD LAST NIGHT, WHO WAS RATHER UPSET ABOUT IT. AMBASSADOR TAHSIN BASHIR WAS CONCERNED THAT THE REFERENCE WILL EMBARRASS SADAT AND PROVIDE GRIST FOR THE MILL OF HIS ARAB ENEMIES. IT MIGHT ALSO DISTORT THE SIGNALS WHICH SADAT HAS BEEN TRYING TO CONVEY AND WILL RILE THE SOVIETS AT A TIME WHEN SADAT IS TRYING TO NORMALIZE HIS RELATIONS WITH THEM. WHEN I ARRIVED LAST NIGHT AT A RECEPTION GIVEN BY PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY SPEAKER SAYED MAREI FOR THE CODEL, I FOUND MAREI VERY UPSET. HE WANTED TO CALL THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND HAVE LATTER ISSUE AN IMMEDIATE STATEMENT DENYING THAT ANYTHING OF THIS SORT HAD BEEN SAID. I URGED HIM NOT TO DO SO, SINCE THIS WOULD HAVE PROJECTED A GOE/ CODEL CONFRONTATION AND WOULD HAVE SOURED WHAT WAS OTHERWISE A VERY POSITIVE VISIT. I SUGGESTED INSTEAD THAT, IF QUESTIONS ARE ASKED OF GOE ON THIS POINT, EGYPTIAN PRESS SPOKESMAN MIGHT SIMPLY POINT OUT THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY A MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HAD BEEN SAID. THEY COULD POINT OUT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION IS WHAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN, NAMELY, AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF THE PEACE PROCESS BY GOING TO GENEVA. MOREOVER, SADAT HAD EXPRESSED THE HOPE, AS HE HAS IN THE PAST, THAT AN AMERICAN PROPOSAL MIGHT AT SOME POINT BE MADE. MAREI AGREED TO FOLLOW THIS COUNSEL. HE WAS ABLE TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE CHAIRMAN, HOWEVER.

4. ALTHOUGH I THOUGHT EGYPTIAN PRESS WOULD BE INSTRUCTED NOT TO CARRY THE "SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY" REFERENCE, BOTH AHRAM AND AKHBAR EDITIONS DID SO THIS MORNING, BUT WITHOUT COMMENT. THIS IS ESSENTIALLY A MINOR TEMPEST AND WITH A BIT OF CAREFUL HANDLING WILL BLOW OVER QUICKLY.
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